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IDRC-SUPPORTED RESEARCH AND ITS INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC POLICY

Knowledge Utilization and Public Policy Processes: A Literature Review

Stephanie Neilson

EVALUATION UNIT
IDRC

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This literature review was conducted between June and December, 2001 as part of a larger strategic evaluation on the influence of IDRC-supported research on public policy currently being undertaken by the Centre's Evaluation Unit. Other completed documents and materials relating to this study are available from the Evaluation Unit or on its website at: http://www.idrc.ca/evaluation/ in the "Our Publications" section.

Table of Contents

Page

1.0 Introduction 1
1.1 Definitions 2
2.0 Knowledge Utilization and Research 3
2.1 'Two Communities' Theory 4
2.2 Knowledge Utilization and Decision Making 7
3.0 Policy Process Models 12
3.1 Rational Models 13
3.1.1 Linear Model 13
3.1.2 Incrementalism 16
3.1.3 Interactive Model 19
3.2 Political Models 21
3.2.1 Policy Network Models 21
3.2.2 Agenda-Setting (Multiple Streams) Model 28
3.2.3 Policy Narratives 33
3.2.4 Policy Transfer Model 36
4.0 Issues 39
4.1 Research Quality 40
4.2 Perceived Influence / "Faking" Influence 41
4.3 New Policy Fields and Environments 42
5.0 Summary 44

Bibliography 47

1.0 Introduction

For many social science researchers, influencing policy makers and/or decision makers is an intended result or expectation of their research. Development researchers are no exception, least of all because they want to know if their research has had an impact on people's everyday lives in terms of poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition or environmental sustainability (Garrett and Islam, 1998). Approximately 23% of the recently approved research projects supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) include in their objectives the expectation that the research they support will influence policy[1]. As well, each of the Program Initiatives include policy influence as an objective, to one degree or another, and which cover all three broad programming areas (i.e., Social and Economic Equity, Environmental and Natural Resource Management, and Information and Communication Technologies). Over its many years of supporting policy inquiry, IDRC has gained considerable experience in fostering research-policy links. Nevertheless, IDRC has not yet clearly articulated what it means by 'policy influence' or 'policy impact'; nor has it developed a systematic, corporate understanding of its successes, limitations, and the factors that facilitate or inhibit policy influence. As a result, IDRC's Evaluation Unit is undertaking a study that will examine these main questions: (1) what constitutes policy influence in IDRC's experience; (2) to what degree and in what way has IDRC-supported research influenced public policy; and (3) what factors and conditions have facilitated or inhibited the public policy influence potential of IDRC-supported research projects. This study will serve two main purposes: (1) to provide learning at the program level which can enhance the design of projects and programs to increase policy influence where that is a key objective; and (2) to create an opportunity for corporate level learning which will provide input into strategic planning processes as well as feedback on performance. These objectives will help IDRC to gain a deeper understanding of how the Centre contributes to public policy processes within the context of development research.

As part of the study, this paper presents the main bodies of work that address the issue of research influence on policy. A considerable literature exists detailing the nature of policy processes, and on whether and how research does or does not inform public policy. There are numerous frameworks and/or models found within the literature to help explain or represent knowledge utilization in decision-making, as well as frameworks explaining how policy change occurs. The first section of the literature review presents an overview of the knowledge utilization literature including its views on the use of knowledge and research in decision-making. The two most enduring findings from this literature are discussed: (1) Caplan's theory regarding the behavioural differences or "cultural gap" between researchers and policy makers; and (2) Weiss' "enlightenment function" of research. As well, various ideas and meanings of 'research' and 'use' are also considered. The second section provides a synopsis of the various policy process frameworks. These include: (1) linear; (2) incrementalism; (3) interactive; (4) policy networks; (5) agenda-setting; (6) policy narratives; and (7) policy transfer.

Each of these conceptualizations has different implications for the extent to which research is able to influence policy, and for how research could be designed to influence policy. Moreover, each has different implications for who are considered to be the main decisions makers in society, and/or to

[1] The objectives of projects and research support projects approved during the period January 2000 – August 2001 were reviewed to identify the prevalence of reference to policy influence in project objectives.

whom the research should be addressed. Further, while much of this literature reflects Northern or developed country settings, some acknowledges the diversity of policy contexts throughout the world.

The final section of this paper will address a number of issues. Few studies examine issues related to research quality and/or completeness in terms of considering the analysis in relation to policy development. Additionally, the notion of perceived influence brought forth by Diane Stone looks at the use of inappropriate evaluation indicators, political patronage and the selective use of research for legitimization rather than policy development (Stone, personal communication, 2001). Krastev's concept 'faking influence' also recently emerged which addresses issues related to the idea that perhaps it is not the strength of the research institution of or the research itself, but the weakness of the other players that allows for 'policy influence'. This posits the question, has this research, or research institution, truly influenced policy, or is the research being utilized merely because policy makers need solutions and these are the only available solutions? The issue of quality, along with the issues of perceived influence and faking influence, lead us to question whether policy influence should always be construed as a positive development outcome? Finally, this paper explores issues associated with two new areas, which for the purpose of this paper will be called generally as 'new policy fields' and 'new policy environments'. New policy fields covers those fields related to such things as information and communication technologies (ICTs), genetics and tobacco control. New policy environments that encompass policy fields which may not be considered as new (i.e., economics, environment, health and education), but are being developed in newly independent states (e.g., Ukraine, countries in Central Asia). The question here is how the policy processes in these areas work to either facilitate or inhibit the use of research in new policy fields or new policy environments.

1.1 Definitions

Reimers and McGinn define policy generally as

> ...a statement of the actions to be preferred in the pursuit of one or more objectives of an organization. Some languages (e.g., Spanish) use the same word to refer to policy as to politics. A recent trend is to define policy as what organizations do...Some writers treat policy not as specific solutions to concrete problems but as frameworks for action (Reimers and McGinn, 1997, p.29).

Kingdon (1984) considers public policymaking as a "set of processes, including at least (1) the setting of an agenda, (2) the specification of alternatives from which a choice is to be made, (3) an authoritative choice among those specified alternatives...and (4) the implementation of a decision" (Kingdon, 1984, p.3). This description is useful when thinking about the term policy, and what it means.

Although these authors take very different perspectives when defining policy, both definitions include the idea of policy as a set of processes, activities or actions. For the purpose of this study, ***policy*** is defined as ***public policy***. As such, the central focus of the study is on issues surrounding the policy process as they relate to the municipal, regional and national levels of government.

Although community and household level decision-makers will be taken into consideration as part of the process, they are not the central focus of this piece.

With respect to "influence", Ivan Krastev in his piece *"Post Communist Think Tanks: Making and Faking Influence"*, refers to Diane Stone's distinction between the two ways in which think tanks can exert influence on policymaking and which is relevant to this discussion: "in the narrow sense, 'influence' can be defined as the direct impact of policy research institutes on legislation or particular government decisions. 'Influence' in the broader sense can be interpreted as the power to change the prevailing paradigm" (Krastev, 2000, p.150). Although it is important to make this distinction when discussing 'policy influence', it is probably more useful to regard 'influence' as being on a continuum with direct impact on one end and changing the prevailing paradigm on the other.

2.0 Knowledge Utilization and Research

Prior to the 1970s, social scientists assumed that policy makers regularly used research for decision-making. Since then, however, several social scientists have written extensively about the use of research in policymaking in terms of whether and how research is used. Results of their observations indicated that policy makers seldom used knowledge gained through social research. Several hypotheses were developed in order to explain the under/non-utilization of knowledge or research by policy makers for decision-making purposes. One of these, the 'two communities' theory was championed by Caplan (1979) who explained the use, or non-use, of research as a symptom of the cultural, or behavioural, gap between researchers and policy makers. For him, the limited use of research by policy makers is, in part, due to the fact that researchers and policy makers have different worldviews. Although the notion of a cultural gap between researchers and policy makers has been given a great deal of positive attention, the weakness of early explanations such as this lies in the fact that it is based on a simple dichotomy of "use" versus "non-use".

The 'two-communities' theory is further weakened by its assumption that the use of research feeds into the policymaking process in a direct, or linear, manner. Later explanations based on the writings of Weiss (1977), Webber (1991), Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) and others include the idea that the research-policy link is not a direct one, particularly in relationship to data and information sources. These writings support the claim that research is only one of many sources of information for policy makers, and that it is not a simple dichotomy between 'use' and 'non-use' but rather that knowledge/research utilization is built on a gradual shift in conceptual thinking over time. This is what Weiss coined as the 'enlightenment function' of research.

2.1 'Two Communities' Theory

Most often associated with Nathan Caplan (1979), one of the earliest hypotheses regarding the under/non-utilization of research in policymaking is the 'two communities' model. According to Caplan, the problem of under/non-utilization of research in the policy process is based on the differences between the behaviour of social scientists as against the behaviour of policy makers. The main argument here is that there is a gap between social scientists and policy makers in relation to their values, language, reward systems and their social/professional affiliations, and as such form two separate communities:

> [t]he 'two communities' hypothesis explains under-utilization of research by depicting social scientists and policymakers as living in separate worlds. The differences make for wide divergences in expectations, in perceptions of mutual impact as well as difficulties in achieving satisfactory and constructive relationships (Booth, 1988, p.228).

Simply stated, Caplan explains the under/non-use of research in terms of the relationship of the researcher and the research system to the policy maker and the policy-making system. The 'differences' or 'cultural gap' is based on the idea that

> [t]he social scientist is concerned with "pure" science and esoteric issues. By contrast, government policy makers are action-oriented, practical persons concerned with obvious and immediate issues (Caplan, 1979, p.459).

Values, Incentives and Relevance

It follows from Caplan's argument that the gap between researchers and policy makers stems from the gap between values and ideology. In his book *Developing Policy Research*, Tim Booth (1988) explains that as Caplan (1975) points out "[p]olicymakers tend to draw their values from the prevailing hierarchy of power. Within the social sciences, however, there is a strong tradition of identification with the underdog, the powerless and the outsider" (Booth, 1988, p.225). These differences in values are normative and as such often extend to conceptual understandings of what social scientists and policy makers consider to be a "problem" or "issue" and how that problem or issue should be re-solved; in other words, their differences lie in how they think the world *should* work.

The relevance of values is central to Caplan's hypothesis. He argues that, although a lack of communication and/or interaction between researchers and policy makers may account for the limited use of research in the policy process, increasing communication and/or interactions will not necessarily increase the use of research in policymaking. Relationships between individuals also include values and ideology:

> [i]t does not follow from our data, however, that an alliance of social scientists and policy makers is the panacea which will produce relevant research and allow translation of the results of scholarly analysis into terms of practical politics. The notion that more and better contact may result in improved understanding and greater utilization may be true, but there are also conditions where familiarity might well breed contempt rather than admiration. The need for reciprocal relations between knowledge producers and knowledge users in policy-making positions is clear, but the problem of achieving effective interaction of this sort necessarily involves value and ideological dimensions as well as technical ones (Caplan, 1979, p.461).

Bernard and Wind echo this idea in their report *Impact Study of IDRC Supported Projects in the areas of Social Policy, Public Goods and Quality of Life* when they state that,

> ...three projects which were undertaken through government ministries also failed to have policy impacts. Thus while some projects failed to achieve policy-level impacts because they did not incorporate key policy makers in the research process, it would seem that merely having appropriate government departments involved does not guarantee policy impacts either (Bernard & Wind, 1998, p.3-29).

In Edwards' report *PCRs and Policy Influence: What Project Completion Reports Have to Say about Public Policy Influence by Centre-Supported Research*, the involvement of policy makers/government officials in the project was the most common link cited: "60% of the selected PCRs clearly state that policy makers, government officials/staff, or political leaders were involved in the project in some fashion..." (Edwards, 2001, p.ii). Yet she goes on to state that, in terms of "actual policy impact" the "most frequent type of policy impact cited was a significant increase in capacity of researchers/research institutions (48% of PCRs), in such areas as research skills and management and the linking of research to utilization of results" (Edwards, 2001, p.ii). This suggests that IDRC program staff assume that simply incorporating policy makers/government officials will establish policy impact, yet the findings go on to show that in fact the inclusion of policy makers/government officials was not cited as being the most frequent type of actual policy impact.

Caplan further suggests that "it is unlikely that any single system for linking producers and users could be applied broadly. Linking arrangements may depend upon the nature of the problem" (Caplan, 1979, p.461). In other words, the nature of the problem, as well as the variety of factors that might be associated with the problem at hand, need to be taken into account before attention is given to increasing the interaction between knowledge producers and knowledge users.

With regards to incentives, the political community and the academic community are also considered to be conflictual in nature. Booth captures these differences between the two incentive systems with the following:

> [the] structure of incentives within the academic community has also driven a wedge between social scientists and policymakers. These incentives attach greater weight to knowledge-building as against policy-forming research; to authoritativeness rather than usefulness; to the pursuit of rigor as against relevance; to the values of scientific independence as against the virtues of policy involvement; and to understanding rather than action (Booth, 1988, p.226).

In addition to the issues of values and incentives, the idea that social scientists pursue rigor rather than relevance or usefulness has perhaps been the most longstanding. Even today, the issue of 'relevance' in relation to research that influences or informs policy is still very much a prevalent one.

The idea of relevance and/or usefulness is also related to the issue of not only what is considered to be 'knowledge', but also the issue of where that knowledge is coming from and its validity and reliability. There is a considerable difference between what scientists and policy makers consider to be knowledge, as well as the difference between how that knowledge was developed or obtained. Social scientists generally see knowledge as something that is theoretically and methodologically sound and/or defensible. Policy makers see knowledge as something that comes from experience:

> [t]he inclination for scholars to see knowledge as deriving from theory and method is mirrored by an inclination among policy makers to see knowledge as coming from experience and common sense (Booth, 1988, p.226).

Succinctly stated, it is not just the validity and/or reliability of the knowledge and research data produced, but also the difference between how researchers and policy makers identify what constitutes or characterizes 'knowledge'.

Like Caplan, Weiss also indicates several problems related to the different types of knowledge. The following are problematic factors associated with the direct use of research findings in the policy making process as outlined by Weiss:

> The reasons for the limited attention paid to social research are not hard to find: weaknesses in the research itself, conflicting demands on policy, and disjunctions between the knowledge needs of policymakers and the research outputs of social scientists. On the research side, much of what goes by the name of social science knowledge is flawed, inconclusive, ambiguous, and contradicted by evidence from other studies. Many research conclusions are limited in scope or out of date…On the policy side, there are a host of competing claims for attention. The policymaking process is a political process, with the basic aim of reconciling interests in order to negotiate a consensus, not implementing logic and truth (Weiss, 1977, p.533).

This cultural gap between researchers and policy makers in relation to their conflicting worldviews has persisted as an underlying theme throughout the knowledge utilization literature as a limiting factor towards the use of research in policymaking. Along with other limiting factors such as the timeliness, relevance, reliability and validity of the research, conflicting worldviews between

researchers and policy makers is seen as an important feature that implies research has little or no impact on policy makers.

Consistent with this, in their book on education research and policy change in developing countries, Reimers and McGinn support the claim that "...the poor coupling between education research and decision making stems from the differences in the backgrounds of researchers and decision makers, differences in their social values, and differences in institutional settings" (Reimers and McGann, 1997, p.20). Views such as this support the idea that current researchers continue to view the cultural or behavioural gap between researchers and policy makers as an important, and often limiting, factor when examining the use of research-based knowledge in the policy making process. However, research approaches or methodologies such as, for example, action research or participatory research, strive to address this issue by incorporating all relevant stakeholders into the research process, including both researchers and policy makers, in order to increase the relevance and usefulness of the research. Although authors such as Bernard and Wind contend that bringing policy makers into the research process does not guarantee policy impact, it may help to create a better understanding between these two groups, or 'communities' of people.

2.2 Knowledge Utilization and Decision Making

This section discusses the various meanings of "use" and "research" as suggested by Caplan, Weiss, and Reimers and McGinn. These various meanings and definitions are relevant to the overall study since a major IDRC organizational objective is to "foster and support the production, dissemination and application of research results leading to policies and technologies that enhance the lives of people in developing countries" (IDRC program directions 2000-2005, p.16). In order to realize this objective, it is important to understand what is meant by research and research use or application.

What Do We Mean By "Use"?

Within the knowledge utilization literature, there is little consensus on whether or how research does or does not inform public policy. One reason for this mixed reaction is due, in part, to the fact that 'use' and 'research' are often left undefined (Weiss, 1991; Webber, 1991). In terms of evaluating the use of research in public policy, this has created a great deal of confusion since it is difficult to measure with any certainty if what it is you are measuring is left undefined or is not clear:

> [f]or the most part, "use" is understood to mean "consideration" and has been measured by interview questions asking 'would you find this type of research helpful?' or 'have you considered this type of information when making a decision?' The exact process of use has been given different interpretations and little effort has been made to compare approaches to measuring knowledge use in the same sample of policy makers (Webber, 1991, pp.5-6).

Both Caplan and Weiss offer their own explanations, or models, of use. For Caplan, the primary distinction is between conceptual and instrumental use. Weiss, on the other hand, offers seven different models with the primary explanation being the "enlightenment function". These are described below.

Instrumental Use Vs. Conceptual Use

In his work on knowledge utilization, Caplan differentiates between 'conceptual use' and 'instrumental use'. Caplan defines instrumental use as being use "...associated with the day-to-day policy issues of limited significance [and that these] applications involved administrative policy issues pertaining to bureaucratic management and efficiency rather than substantive public policy issues" (Caplan, 1979, p.462). According to Caplan, instrumental use is almost always associated with "micro-level decisions" or small, incremental decisions which are based on empirical knowledge or data. Conceptual use, on the other hand, describes the gradual shifts in terms of policy makers' awareness and reorientation of their basic perspectives. Conceptual use "...involve[s] important policy matters which affect the nation as a whole" (Caplan, 1979, p.464), and is almost always associated with "macro-level decisions". Of these two, Weiss (1991) argues that conceptual use is more common, and is central to her "enlightenment model" of research.

Caplan explains this differentiation between the type of knowledge and how this knowledge is used at different decision-making levels with the following:

> [w]hereas the policy makers studied generally rely almost exclusively upon routine agency sources of information for reaching decisions regarding micro-level issues, they were eclectic in their use of information for decisions involving issues of greater consequences. In addition to government reports and staffsupplied [sic] information typically relied upon so heavily for microlevel [sic] decisions the meta-level decisions were influenced by information acquired independently by polic [sic] makers from diverse sources external to government – sources such as newspapers, books, professional journals, magazines, television, and radio. At least 50% of respondents studied mentioned each of these as important sources of "social science" information (Caplan, 1979, p.465).

In other words, Caplan's study found that policy makers more often use empirical data for smaller, routine, incremental decisions whereas larger, fundamental decisions required information from various different sources, as well as social research data.

Enlightenment Function of Research

In her work on knowledge utilization and decision-making, Carol Weiss (1991) identifies seven meanings of 'use' or models of research utilization. Of these seven models of research use, the knowledge-driven, problem-solving and enlightenment models are perhaps the most well-known. She acknowledges, however, that for most people, the prevailing concept of research utilization is "problem solving":

> [the] prevailing concept of research utilization stresses application of specific research conclusions to specific decisional choices. A problem exists; information or understanding is needed to generate a solution to the problem or to select among alternative solutions; research provides the missing knowledge; the decision makers then reach a solution (Weiss, 1977, p.533).

However, as this citation illustrates, the problem-solving model is a representation of a rational model. Subsequently, it has been criticized for its underlying assumption that research feeds directly into the policymaking and/or decision-making process in a direct or linear fashion. Weiss furthers this argument by suggesting that perhaps problem solving is not the most prevalent use of social research but that the use of research is actually much more diffuse and indirect:

> Data from three recent studies suggest that the major use of social research is not the application of specific data to specific decisions. Rather, government decision makers tend to use research indirectly, as a source of ideas, information, and orientations to the world. Although the process is not easily discernible, over time it may have profound effects on policy. Even research that challenges current values and political feasibilities is judged useful by decision makers (Weiss, 1977, p.531).

Box 1: Weiss' Seven Meanings of 'Use'

(1) knowledge-driven: application of basic research; this model assumes that basic research provides an opportunity for policy-relevant research which can then be applied;

(2) problem-solving: communication of research on an agreed upon problem to the policy maker; this model implies that there is consensus between the researchers and the policy makers on the solution or end-state;

(3) enlightenment: education of the policy maker; that with time the accumulation of research will influence policy by educating the policy maker;

(4) political: rationalization for previously arrived at decision; used by policy makers to bolster support or provide ammunition for opposition;

(5) tactical: requesting additional information to delay action; often used by government agencies or other organizations/institutions as a response to a problem or issue;

(6) interactive: competing information sources; this implies that policy makers are actively searching for policy-relevant information that is not based on social science research; this type of use is considered to be more realistic of how policy makers use information in the policy process;

(7) intellectual enterprise: policy research is just one type of many intellectual pursuits.

Sources: Webber, 1991; Auriat, 1998

These different meanings of use are relevant to IDRC's work and the research it supports as explained by Bernard and Wind:

> Not surprisingly, projects which aim *solely at knowledge generation*, while they may well produce data and analyses of high quality and validity, do not necessarily induce policy or programme change in the same way that well-executed projects incorporating capacity and/or action goals do, almost by definition...Consistent with this, projects which dealt with only a fairly abstract issue or situation rather than with a more tangible definable problem, one for which "people who care" were identified, seemed to realize fewer apparent impacts (Bernard &Wind, 1998, p.4-16).

In other words, research for knowledge is often difficult to link to action and/or policy impacts; there is a need for research to not only be relevant to policy, but that it also needs someone to 'champion the cause' for the relevant audience. Furthering this, Bernard and Wind go on to explain that policy impacts concerning social projects/programs are more difficult to produce and as such require explicit links between research and policy by making the transition from "a research paradigm to a user one" (Bernard & Wind, 1998, p.4-16). For these two authors this means that "even technically 'good quality' results must be able to find their relevant audience and present themselves in user-tailored format" (Bernard & Wind, 1998, p.4-16). The issues surrounding the use of knowledge-driven or knowledge generating research are important factors for considering the underlying assumptions regarding research objectives that include the expectation of influencing policy.

Although the knowledge generation and problem-solving models of knowledge/research utilization are considered important contributions to the field, it is the enlightenment model of research that has gained considerable attention and agreement within the knowledge utilization literature. Weiss' enlightenment model illustrates the idea that knowledge gained through research can enlighten or broaden the existing knowledge base of policy makers which, over time, can create a gradual shift of conceptual thinking and, therefore, the policies which support that conceptual thinking. In their work on advocacy coalitions, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith note that the enlightenment function of research is one of four major findings in the field of knowledge utilization. It is also perhaps one of the most realistic uses of research since it rests on the idea of the accumulation of knowledge through the aggregation of findings that promotes a gradual shift in concepts and paradigms. In relation to such shifts, Weiss sees the role of research as clarifying, accelerating and legitimizing changes in opinion and that this may be the most important contribution social research can make to the policy process (Weiss, 1977, p.535). In a similar vein, Reimers and McGinn argue that

> some authors have proposed that the expectation that educational research will have immediate policy application is based on unrealistic assumptions. Instead, they argue, the main contribution of education research is to shape, challenge, or change the way policy makers and practitioners think about problems (Reimers and McGinn, 1997, p.21).

Examinations of the various uses of research and the contributions research can make to the policy making process is an important step with respect to gaining a deeper understanding of the policy process. Understanding what is meant by research is also an important undertaking. The next section considers the various definitions or types of research.

Defining "Research[2]"

In her later work, Weiss (1991) also identifies three models, or hypotheses of 'research': (1) research as data; (2) research as ideas; and (3) research as argumentation. According to Weiss, these three hypotheses underlie the use of research by policy makers as well as others such as interest groups, and each hypothesis of use makes its own assumptions about the nature of the policymaking process. First, the ***research as data*** hypothesis is described as taking a technocratic view of research and tends to be more mechanistic in terms of its application to the problem at hand. It assumes that the data or sets of findings obtained meets the users' needs and that there is no conflict in terms of what solution, or goal, is wanted or required in order to resolve the problem. Second, ***research as ideas***, is perceived to be more general in nature. As Weiss describes, "the telling characteristic of research as ideas is that the actual findings of the study have disappeared and become transmuted into a simple 'story'" (Weiss, 1991, p.2). In this sense, research is often used in situations when problems are seen as being complex in nature, when uncertainty is high and ideas are in demand. Third, ***research as argumentation*** takes an 'advocacy' position: "not only are the data lost, as with research as ideas, but the data are selectively lost...in order to make the argument more persuasive" (Weiss, 1991, p.2). Research as argumentation is used when a decision has already been made, and policy makers and/or interest groups draw on research to take an advocacy position.

Box 2: Weiss' Three Models of Research

(1) Research as data: likely to be influential in situations of consensus on values and goals; when two or three alternatives are sharply opposed; and when decision makers are analytically sophisticated;

(2) Research as ideas: likely to be influential at the early stages of policy discussion; when existing policy is in disarray; when uncertainty is high; and in decentralized policy arenas where many separate bodies decide;

(3) Research as argumentation: likely to be influential when conflict is high; in legislatures; and after decisions have already been made.

Source: Weiss, 1991, p.3

Based on the work of Vielle (IDRC, 1981), Fernando Reimers and Noel McGinn in their book, *Informed Dialogue: Using Research to Shape Education Policy Around the World*, offer four types of research: academic, planning, instrumentation and action. They go on to suggest, "while all types can be useful to a decision maker, it is necessary to keep in mind that each answers a different question" (1997, p.22).

According to these two authors, it is important to recognize the *type* of research that is being conducted, and to recognize the limitations that a particular type of research may inherently possess:

[2] For the purpose of this paper, this section explores various different hypotheses and meanings of the term "research" beyond the level of research frameworks, approaches, methodologies etc. (e.g., Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), action research, participatory research, feminist participatory research), since the issues raised here in relation to 'type' of research and/or 'use' of research cut across the boundaries of such research approaches.

Much education research is not designed to inform choices and therefore provides an inadequate, or at least insufficient, basis for policy. Descriptive or explanatory research can be generalized only to what is, not to new situations the policy maker wants to create (Reimers & McGinn, 1997, p.23).

Box 3: Four Types of Research and the Four Questions They Ask

(1) Academic Research: Are our systems of explanation (theories, models and conceptual frameworks) correct? The question is answered by rigorous testing of hypotheses drawn from the conceptual framework.

(2) Planning Research: What are the factors that produce the outcome we are seeking? This kind of research uses statistical analysis to generate patterns of relationships among variables.

(3) Instrumentation Research: How can we construct or organize the factors required to produce the desired outcomes? Repeated trial and error methods are used in the instrumentation process in preparing a new curriculum.

(4) Action Research: Can we in fact produce the outcomes we desire? In the end, the objective of the research is the outcomes themselves rather than the knowledge of how to achieve them.

Source: Reimers and McGinn, 1997, p.22

The crucial point here is that different research approaches, frameworks, methodologies etc. imply different sets of questions, producing different kinds of answers, for different purposes. Succinctly stated, "...the character of the research is shaped by how it is conducted" (Stone et al., 2001, p.16). Further, each of these types, or conceptualizations, also implies a specific or particular type of research organization, agency, etc., since the type of research being conducted often depends on the type of organization or agency undertaking, or perhaps more importantly, funding, the research.

For the purpose of this study, these conceptualizations, hypotheses and models of both 'use' and 'research' are important considerations when looking at the 'type' of research the Centre supports (i.e., research as data, ideas, argument/advocacy) and how that research is used or applied (i.e., for knowledge generation, problem-solving, or learning). Building on this typology will create a deeper understanding of what the Centre means by 'research' and 'use' in order to better understand not only ***what*** are its contributions to the development process, but ***how*** it contributes to this process.

The next question to look at is how does research-based knowledge inform the policy process? In order to answer this question, we need to examine the various policy process models, and how research-based knowledge is or is not used in each of these models.

3.0 Policy Process Models

While some social scientists were writing about knowledge utilization, other researchers began in-depth explorations into the policymaking process. As a result of these explorations several policy process models were developed. The models presented in this review include: (1) linear; (2)

incrementalist; (3) interactive; (4) policy networks; (5) agenda-setting; (6) policy narratives; and (7) policy transfer. Each of these models presents its own conceptualization of how the policy process works and, therefore, its own assumptions regarding the use of research-based knowledge in policy formulation, decision-making and/or policy implementation. The idea that research can influence or inform the policy process can be roughly divided into two broad camps: rationalist and political,

> [a] 'rationalist' point of view is that new research can directly prompt policy change. The 'political camp' on the other hand assume that various external factors play a key part both in defining the question that a research project tackles and in influencing the impact of the answers on policy (Philpott, 1999, p.1).

This paper presents an overview of the principle models found within both camps. The rationalist models include the linear, incrementalist and interactive models as representations of the policy process and originate from classical economic theory (rational actor theory) "in which an actor is presumed to be able to assess all possible alternatives on the basis of full information, and then to establish priorities among them in terms of an optimal way to reach a stated goal or preference" (Grindle and Thomas, 1991, p.28). Later adaptations of rational policy models are more generally based on political economy theory. The political models, which derive from the political literature (including comparative politics and international relations), and contemporary literary theory include the agenda-setting or multiple streams, policy networks, policy narratives and the policy transfer models.

Each of these models has its own conceptual framework for understanding the policy process and the actors and/or decision makers involved in this process. As such, each of these models is founded upon certain values, ideological stances and assumptions in terms of the policy process and the influences on this process.

3.1 Rational Models

3.1.1 Linear Model

The linear model, also known as the stages or rational comprehensive model, originally derives from the work of Lasswell (1951) and is regarded as the 'textbook' approach to policy making (Porter, 1995). As explained by Stone et al., the label 'rational comprehensive' became known as such since the model is

> ...'rational' in the sense that it follows a logical and ordered sequence of policy-making phases. It is 'comprehensive' in the sense that it canvasses, assesses and compares all options, calculating all the social, political and economic costs and benefits of a public policy (Stone et al, 2001, p.5).

Although it is still considered by some as an accurate and relevant description of the policymaking process, the linear model fell out of favour with most researchers in this area of study. This is due, in part, to the fact that this approach separates policy making into rational, sequential steps; these

steps are generally described as agenda-setting, decision making, adoption, implementation and evaluation (Porter, 1995, p.3).

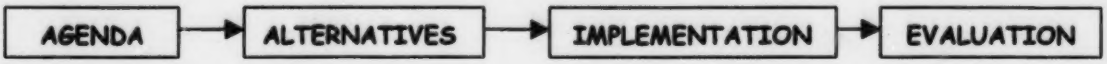
According to Sutton, the linear model

> ...outlines policymaking as a problem-solving process which is rational, balanced, objective and analytical. In the model, decisions are made in a series of sequential phases, starting with identification of a problem or issue, and ending with a series of activities to solve or deal with it (Sutton, 1999, p.9).

This is problematic since knowledge is not necessarily used in linear or sequential manner. Yin and Gwaltney propose that "[i]nstead of a strictly linear sequence, in which knowledge is first produced and then utilized, the evidence suggests that knowledge utilization is a continuous process, starting when research starts" (Yin and Gwaltney, 1981, p.570). It follows then that if knowledge is not utilized in a linear or sequential manner, then a linear or sequential policy making process cannot provide a realistic representation of the process itself.

According to Stone et al., the role of the researcher in this model therefore is to research and present all of the policy options for policy makers in order to encourage them to examine each of the options available (Stone et al., 2001, p.5). However, they go on to argue that this assumes researchers have the time, resources and capacity to research each of the policy options as well as having access to all the information necessary to fulfill such a request (Stone et al., 2001, p.5).

The following diagram provides a simplified representation of the linear model in relation to the policy process:



A few authors (Meier, 1993; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993) point to the idea that this simple separation of the policy process is, in fact, one important contribution the linear model has made to this field of study. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith suggest that disaggregating the process into discrete units of analysis is useful for researchers since it provides "an array of useful 'stage-focussed' research, particularly regarding agenda setting and policy implementation" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p.2). Additionally, with respect to developing countries,

> ...dividing the policy process into discrete steps is also the analytic point of departure for much of the more recent work on policy formation in non-western settings. For example, in a recent collection of essays on policy reform and the 'new' political economy in developing countries, Gerald Meier notes that the 'usual' approach is to view policy formation as a '...linear process that goes from predictions and prescriptions given by economists [or other technical advisors] to the policy maker, to policy choice by the policy maker, to implementation, and finally to the policy outcome' (Porter, 1995, p.10).

Separating the process into discrete units allows researchers the ability to systematically examine and analyze the various components which broadly make up the policy process.

Furthering this, in their work on policy processes in developing countries, Grindle and Thomas describe how the linear model translates into reality in developing countries in relation to aid and donor agencies:

> The linear model has led donor agencies to support substantial efforts to strengthen policy analysis in developing countries in the expectation that good analysis will translate into good decision making and this into good policy. Operationalizing this expectation has generally taken the form of technical assistance contracts to build capacity in planning and policy analysis in many sectors (Grindle and Thomas, 1990, p.1164).

Reimers and McGinn describe how they view the linear approach to policy making in practice. According to these two, the underlying assumption in this approach or what they term "utilization as using precooked conclusions", research produces knowledge that can inform policy choices:

> The central question in this approach is, What can the researcher as knowledge producer, do to influence the process of policy making? The perspectives within this approach range from those proposing efforts to increase the effectiveness of dissemination to those that propose advocacy and social marketing as ways to persuade policy makers. Common to these perspectives is the assumption that knowledge production and utilization proceed in stages. The first stage, in which knowledge is created, is the domain of the researcher. In the second stage – dissemination or persuasion – the researcher tries through various means to capture the attention of a seemingly passive decision maker in order to translate the results of research into policy more or less automatically (Reimers and McGinn, 1997, p.71).

However, the linear approach to the policymaking process has been heavily criticized for its unrealistic view of the process as well as for the fact that it is not very dynamic in nature. Many researchers argue that the linear model does not capture the reality of the policymaking process; that is does not resonate with people's experiences. Moreover, as many authors have noted, (Grindle and Thomas, Porter, Stone et al.) most policy makers have neither the time nor the resources to assess all of the policy options brought forth:

> [c]ritiques of overly rational and comprehensive models of decision making in the policy process are longstanding and widespread. Rational models do not describe policy making realities very well – at least in the United States. Policy actors seldom evaluate very many alternatives for action or compare them systematically (Porter, 1995, p.9).

For the most part, policy makers are not so much interested in making the "best" possible decision based on every option available as they are in satisfying the demands of the public. As Stone et al. explain, the implications of this in terms of research influencing policy are twofold:

> Rather than searching out all policy alternatives, research often stops as soon as a workable solution is identified. Furthermore, the combination of 'sunk costs' in existing policies, the cost (time and resources) of compiling and assessing information, and the (generally) poor predictive capacity of (social) science result in less than 'comprehensive' outcomes from the policy-making process (Stone et al., 2001, p.5).

In addition, the linear model and its rational use of research assumes knowledge to be technical in nature and values 'hard' data and findings which are seen as being more readily incorporated into policies than are ideas and concepts. However, there is often a lack of hard, technical data and information in developing countries. As Oliver Saasa explains,

> [t]hose traditional models that emphasize rationality [in decision making] are clearly inappropriate for developing countries...The information that is available to the policy-makers may not only be inadequate but could also be highly unreliable both at the more objective, quantifiable level and at the subjective level of data concerning societal value preferences...(Oliver Saasa, quoted in Grindle and Thomas, 1991, p.46).

The implications of this lack of data and information, or access to this data and information, with respect to decision making in developing countries "also means that challenges to government decisions are easier, in the absence of concrete evidence, and likely to be more politically oriented. As a result, political power tends to be the central determinant of policy outcomes and implementation" (Grindle and Thomas, 1991, p.46).

Finally, the linear or stages model also assumes that the only actors involved in the process are the 'policy elites' or those individuals who are considered to be 'government officials'. This too is a limiting factor in terms of using this framework for analysis since many instances of policy change in developing countries involve actors external to the official policy or government apparatus.

The idea of being able to systematically examine the policy process as discrete units of analysis may provide the researchers in this study the opportunity to explore and describe the various components found within the policy process in different developing country contexts and policy environments. However, the limitations of this model preclude its usefulness or relevance as the framework for analysis in this study.

3.1.2 Incrementalism

One response to the linear model's more static, comprehensive approach to the policymaking process is Lindblom's incrementalist model. According to Grindle and Thomas the concept of incrementalism was introduced as a modification to the linear model in order to explain how decision makers,

> ...when confronted with the need to change policy, attempt to reduce uncertainty, conflict, and complexity by making incremental or marginal changes over time. According to the model, the more uncertainty exists in a given decision situation, the more will incremental strategies be adopted (Grindle and Thomas, 1991, p.28).

For Lindblom, the policy process "is one of disjointed incrementalism or muddling through" (Lindblom, 1980, quoted in Sutton, 1999, p.10). The incrementalist model focuses on the decision making aspect of the policy making process and presents it as one which takes small incremental steps towards policy change. In this sense, policy change is seen more as a reform process where decision makers make modest or regular decisions rather than sudden, dramatic or fundamental decisions. According to Lindblom, policy decisions demand a vast amount of information and policymakers must walk a fine line between making decisions based on "too much or too little information" (Lindblom, 1980, p.21). As a result, comprehensive decision-making, as characterized by the linear model, is not useful:

> [t]he only reasonable alternative [is] to divide large decisions into smaller ones and distribute them among a large number of actors who would make their decisions independent of each other...each actor would pursue his own interests on the basis of information received about the actions of all the other actors in the situation. With each actor pressing for his own advantage, all relevant points of view...would eventually be brought out for their joint consideration. Under given circumstances, the outcome of such a process would also tend to be the most rational that was practically attainable (Friedmann, 1987, p.129).

By distributing decisions in this way, Lindblom argues that the decision making process becomes more manageable and interactive since this approach compels the various actors within the process to communicate their interests and points of view among each other. Using this approach to policymaking will, according to Lindblom, result in rational policy decisions and policies that can be managed by the decision makers within the policy system.

There are a number of limitations associated with this model. To begin with, critics of this approach are quick to point out that the incrementalist model is only a partial explanation in terms of the entire policymaking process. Kingdon argues that this approach does not explain agenda setting very well since it does not explain how ideas are selected to be put on the agenda:

> [i]f agendas changed incrementally, a gradual heightening of interest in a subject over the course of years would be apparent...But interest does not gradually build in this fashion. Instead of incremental agenda change, a subject rather suddenly 'hits', 'catches on' or 'takes off' (Kingdon, 1984, p.85).

Moreover, since incrementalism does not explain drastic or fundamental changes, it is limited in its ability to explain 'crisis-driven' policymaking. Based on their own case studies of policymaking in developing countries, Grindle and Thomas note that,

> ...when policy elites perceive a crisis to exist, the decision-making process is distinct from noncrisis situations in terms of the pressures for reform, the stakes involved in change, the level of decision makers involved, the degree of change considered, and the timing of reforms. Our cases clearly indicate that perceived crisis sets in motion a process of decision making characterized by pressure to act, high stakes, high-level decision makers, major changes from existing policy and urgency (Grindle and Thomas, 1991, pl.76).

Dror takes the argument concerning major changes even further when he states, "most changes today are so major that past experiences have become of little use. Incrementalism has broken down" (1997, p.12). These authors imply that incrementalism is not useful as a model to explain the policy process in developing countries since more often than not these countries experience big, fundamental changes which therefore require a different approach to policy making.

Somewhat more yielding, Rebecca Sutton argues that this model only deals with existing policies and, therefore, simply maintains the status quo. In her analysis of incrementalism, she notes that "[i]ncrementalism policy making is essentially remedial, it focuses on small changes to existing policies rather than dramatic fundamental changes" (Sutton, 1999, p.10). As a result of its focus on the smaller changes to policies, it would follow that this model has little or no room for research since innovation and experimentation are assumed to be nonessential. As Stone et al. explain this leaves researchers on the sidelines of the policy process:

> [p]ragmatism in policy-making tends toward the avoidance of costly innovation or departures from routine practice, and either the marginal alteration of existing policies or reactive policies to problems that have already arisen. Researchers consequently are likely to be sidelined in the policy-making process (Stone et al., 2001, p.6).

The lack of attention to "innovation" by the incrementalist model is also felt by Grindle and Thomas who state that it is "less useful in explaining the conditions under which initiatives for fundamental change – innovation, not incrementalism – are likely to be adopted" (1991, p.29).
Finally, Grindle and Thomas write that since the incrementalist model focuses on bureaucrats and organized bureaucracies, it is not useful for explaining the external factors that may either facilitate or inhibit decisions in the policymaking process:

> ...rational models [including incrementalism]...provide little insight into how societal interests, historical experiences, ideologies, values, alliances, and other factors penetrate the world of decision makers and shape or even determine decisional outcomes (Grindle and Thomas, 1991, p.29).

When policy changes are slow and/or satisfactory, then an incremental approach to policy making is all that is needed. As a result, the incrementalist model provides a useful framework for analyzing policy changes to existing policies. However, it is not useful for those contexts where big, fundamental changes occur more regularly than routine changes. Some authors (e.g., Grindle and Thomas, Dror) would argue that developing country contexts more often than not experience abrupt and/or fundamental changes to existing policies. Furthermore, external factors such as historical

experiences, values and alliances play large and influential roles in many developing countries. To exclude these factors in the final analysis, as the incrementalist model does, would deny some of the most salient features found within the political context of many, if not most, developing countries.

3.1.3 Interactive Model

The focus of this approach is on the implementation phase of the policy process and originates from a political economy perspective. The framework for this model was developed by Grindle and Thomas (1990) and is based on the policy reforms undertaken in developing nations. For these two authors, central to the model is the idea that,

> ...a reform initiative may be altered or reversed at any stage in its life cycle by the pressures and reactions of those who oppose it. Unlike the linear model, the interactive model views policy reform as a process, one in which interested parties can exert pressure for change at many points...Understanding the location, strength, and stakes involved in those attempts to promote, alter or reverse policy reform initiatives is central to understanding the outcomes (Grindle and Thomas, 1990, p.1166).

The primary distinction that Grindle and Thomas make between the interactive model and the previous rational models is that the interactive model takes policy change as the central analytical feature with respect to the difference between policy adoption and policy implementation. The authors make clear that it is the implementation phase which they see as being crucial to the policy making process:

> [o]ur observations over many years as well as our research indicate that implementation is often the most crucial aspect of the policy process and that the outcomes of implementation efforts are highly variable, ranging from successful to unsuccessful, but including also an almost limitless number of other potential outcomes (1990, p.1165).

Another important distinction between this framework and the previous two rational frameworks is that Grindle and Thomas make the developing country experience explicit in their model. As such, it is important to note that,

> [i]mplicit in this framework is an assumption that although each experience in policy and institutional change and each national context is in many ways unique, policy elites face similar dilemmas in the choices they make and share similar concerns. Moreover, within the significant diversity that exists among developing countries, broad historical, economic, and political conditions set a common context within which decisions must be made and carried out (Grindle and Thomas, 1991, p.13).

This interactive model is set on the following propositions, which, according to the authors, appear self-evident, yet "stand in direct contradiction to major bodies of theory about the sources and dynamics of public policy" (Grindle and Thomas, 1991, p.19):

- Decision makers are not fully constrained by the interests of social classes, organized societal interests, international actors, or international economic conditions, but have space for defining the content, timing and sequencing of reform initiatives.
- Decision makers often have articulate and logical explanations of the problems they seek to resolve based on their experience, study, personal values, ideology, institutional affiliation, or professional training.
- Decision makers may alter their perspectives on what constitute preferred or viable policy options in response to experience, study, values, ideology, institutional affiliation, and professional training.
- Decision makers often take active and formative roles in shaping reforms to make them politically acceptable to divergent interests in society or in government.
- Bringing about changes in public policies and institutions is a normal and ongoing aspect of government and a normal and ongoing function of many officials.

Following neoclassical political economy theory, Grindle and Thomas use this framework to focus their attention on those actors who perceive that they can influence policy decisions to enhance their gains or reduce their losses. As they explain,

> [a]ccording to these propositions, policy elites – those formally charged with making authoritative decisions in government – have considerable scope to identify problems, articulate goals, define solutions, and think strategically about their implementation (Grindle and Thomas, 1991, p.19).

The key factor for this model is an understanding of the relationship between the policy elites and the political environment or context surrounding the policy elites in relation to the issue at hand:

> [o]ur model of the policy process begins with two sets of factors. One set focuses on background characteristics of policy elites; the other emphasizes the constraints and opportunities created by the broader contexts within which they seek to accomplish their goals (1991, p.33).

In other words, for an adequate explanation, you need to know the field, know the actors and know the context. Understanding the field, the actors involved and the context in which the process occurs are key considerations in this study.

Overall, although this model makes external contexts explicit, similar to the previous rational models, the interactive model focuses on policy elites in the policy development phase and assumes research is used directly in the policy making process. Additionally, it appears that the interactive model, as presented by Grindle and Thomas based on the reforms of the 1980s, is no longer appropriate to the current contexts since many of those countries have since experienced extreme external shocks making the previous reform process irrelevant.

3.2 Political Models

3.2.1 Policy Network Models

Policy network models derive from political pluralist approaches. Grindle and Thomas write that in pluralist approaches to political analysis, "public policy results from conflict, bargaining, and coalition formation among a potentially large number of societal groups organized to protect or advance particular interests common to their members" (Grindle and Thomas, 1997, pp.22-23). Consistent with this, Reimers and McGinn state that, for them, "policy change is the result of a process of negotiating competing interests within the education organization and with the external environment where the system operates..." (Reimers and McGinn, 1997, pp.19-20). The approaches outlined here differ from the rationalist models in that these models explain policy change as a function of the diverse actors and/or groups of actors found within the policymaking system and, therefore, better illustrate the complexities of the system.

An eminent writer in the policy process field, Diane Stone refers generally to policy network approaches as "knowledge communities". In her book, *Capturing the Political Imagination: Think Tanks and the Policy Process*, Stone captures these various different "policy network" approaches and outlines their contributions to the field, as well as how they differ amongst each other. These can be referred to as (1) issue networks; (2) epistemic communities; (3) policy communities; and (4) advocacy coalitions. This section will provide a brief overview of each of these policy network models.

According to Stone, the differences between these four approaches can be explained as such:

> ...epistemic communities are closed groupings, whereas advocacy coalitions as well as issue networks and policy communities, to varying degrees, are more open. Neither issue networks nor policy communities have clear boundaries. Furthermore, once an epistemic community achieves its policy project, it disappears, whereas the other networks are a more persistent feature of policy-making. The role of vested interest is also a more important variable in issue networks and policy communities than for epistemic communities in which ideas, expertise and knowledge are paramount (Stone, 1996, p.92).

Although Stone argues that the role of vested interest is a more important variable in issue networks than for epistemic communities, it is still knowledge, as Heclo points out below, that is important for issue networks, and not beliefs or belief systems, as with the advocacy coalition framework where belief systems are central to the framework.

Issue Networks

The first to systematically examine these groups of individuals that are found within the policy process system was Hugh Heclo. In his work *"Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment"*, Heclo writes "[l]ooking for the few who are powerful, we tend to overlook the many whose webs of

influence provoke and guide the exercise of power" (1978, p.102). He calls these webs 'issue networks'.

According to Heclo, "issue networks...comprise a large number of participants with quite variable degrees of mutual commitment or of dependence on others in their environment; in fact it is almost impossible to say where a network leaves off and its environment begins" (Heclo, 1978, p.102). He goes on to describe that,

> [p]articipants move in and out of the networks constantly. Rather than groups united in dominance over a program, no one as far as one can tell, is in control of the policies and issues. Any direct material interest is often secondary to intellectual or emotional commitment. Network members reinforce each other's sense of issues as their interests, rather than (as standard political or economic models would have it) interests defining positions on issues (Heclo, 1978, p.102).

Specifically, however, Heclo defines issue networks as a

> ...shared-knowledge group having to do with some aspect (or as defined by the network, some problem) of public policy. It is therefore more well-defined than, first, a shared-attention group or "public"; those in the networks are likely to have a common base of information and understanding of how one knows about policy and identifies its problems (Heclo, 1978, pp.103-104).

He goes on to say that since issue networks are based on knowledge (first), they do not necessarily produce agreement or consensus and as a result, will not necessarily form a coalition or what he refers to as a "shared-action group" or become an interest group where shared beliefs is paramount (Heclo, 1978, pp.103-104). Consistent with this, Stone writes "an issue network is...characterised by participants with conflicting interests, a lack of common values and little consensus regarding problem definition or the outcomes of policy interventions" (Stone, 1996, p.90). It is the issue, or policy debate, that is of significance for issue networks rather than their own personal or vested interests in that issue or debate. Further, it is their knowledge of the issue and not their professional training that makes them an expert in the area under debate. As Heclo explains,

> [p]articular professions may be prominent, but the true experts in the networks are those who are issue-skilled (that is, well-informed about the ins and outs of a particular policy debate) regardless of formal professional training. More than mere technical experts, network people are policy activists who know each other through the issues (Heclo, 1978, p.103).

Epistemic Community Approach

Haas defines an epistemic community as a "network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area" (Haas, 1992, p.3). He goes on to explain that,

> [a]lthough an epistemic community may consist of professionals from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds, they have (1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, which provide a value-based rationale for the social action of community members; (2) shared causal beliefs, which are derived from their analysis of practices leading or contributing to a central set of problems in their domain and which then serve as the basis for elucidating the multiple linkages between possible policy actions and desired outcomes; (3) shared notions of validity – that is, intersubjective, internally defined criteria for weighing and validating knowledge in the domain of their expertise; and (4) a common policy enterprise – that is, a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed, presumably out the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence (Haas, 1992, p.3).

These shared beliefs rest on beliefs concerning cause-and-effect and knowledge; that is, they rest on intellectual beliefs rather than emotional beliefs. Haas captures these differences between epistemic communities and other groups, such as interest groups with the following:

> ...it is the combination of having a shared set of causal and principled (analytic and normative) beliefs, a consensual knowledge base, and a common policy enterprise (common interests) that distinguish epistemic communities from various other groups. They differ from interest groups in that the epistemic community members have shared causal beliefs and cause-and-effect understandings. If confronted with anomalies that undermined their causal beliefs, they would withdraw from the policy debate, unlike interest groups (Haas, 1992, p.18).

As well, it is also important to understand how epistemic communities are further distinguished from the broader scientific community:

> [e]pistemic communities must also be distinguished from the broader scientific community as well as from professions and disciplines. Although members of a given profession or discipline may share a set of causal approaches or orientations and have a consensual knowledge base, they lack the shared normative commitments of members of an epistemic community (Haas, 1992, p.19).

However, Haas also argues that while epistemic communities may consist of groups of individuals from particular professions or disciplines, they are not formed around a particular profession or discipline. For example, economists as a group are a profession but not necessarily an epistemic community; on the other hand, a group of economists who follow a particular school of economics, such as Keynesian economists, may constitute an epistemic community (Haas, 1992, p.19).

For Diane Stone, "knowledge is a central aspect of power in the epistemic community perspective. It explains how expert forms of advice penetrate bureaucracies and influence decision makers...The epistemic community approach focuses on expert actors in policy making who share norms, causal beliefs and political projects and who seek change in specific areas of policy" (Stone, 1996, p.86). She further contends that, "the status and prestige associated with epistemic community expertise

and their high professional training and authoritative knowledge regarding a particular problem is politically empowering and provides limited access to the political system" (Stone, 1996, p.88).

According to Haas, decision makers are increasingly turning to epistemic communities for advice when faced with uncertainties and issues which are increasingly complex and technical in nature (1992, p.12). "Conditions of uncertainty, as characterized by Alexander George, are those under which actors must make choices without 'adequate information about the situation at hand' or in the face of 'the inadequacy of available general knowledge needed for assessing the expected outcomes of different courses of action' (Haas, 1992, pp.13-14).

Policy Communities

Stone et al. define policy communities as "stable networks of policy actors from both inside and outside of government, which are highly integrated with the policy-making process…[and are] the most institutionalised variant of the policy network concepts (Stone et al., 2001, p.33). Consistent with this idea, Kingdon writes that,

> [p]olicy communities are composed of specialists in a given policy area – health, housing, environmental protection, [etc.]. In any of these policy areas, specialists are scattered both through and outside of government…academics, consultants, or analysts for interest groups. But they have in common their concern with one area of policy problems (Kingdon, 1984, p.123).

According to Stone, policy communities differ significantly from epistemic communities since an epistemic community "…coalesces around 'objectivity', 'expertise' and 'scientific authority' [and] policy communities are not characterised by shared principled beliefs" (Stone, 1996 p.91). Further, policy communities are based on "common understandings of problems or of the decision-making process within a given policy domain. They emerge and consolidate around specific policy fields or subsystems (such as education, tax or security) and revolve around relevant institutions such as specific ministries or government agencies" (Stone et al., 2001, p.33).

For the most part, policy communities consist of individuals or actors Kingdon calls "policy entrepreneurs". According to Kingdon, policy entrepreneurs are advocates for certain proposals or for the prominence of an idea, they may be a part of the government or they may be outside of government, they may be an elected or an appointed official or they may be a part of interest groups or research organizations (Kingdon, 1984, p.129). The key point, however, is that much like a business entrepreneur, a policy entrepreneur invests resources in the hope of making a return on that investment:

> [b]ut their defining characteristic, much as in the case of a business entrepreneur, is their willingness to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money – in the hope of a future return. That return might come to them in the form of policies of which they approve, satisfaction from participation, or even personal aggrandizement in the form of job security or career promotion (Kingdon, 1984, p.129).

Advocacy Coalition

Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith developed the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) in order to better explain policy changes as a function of time and external shocks to the system, such as, for example, macroeconomic conditions or changes in government. According to Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, advocacy coalitions consist of

> ...people from a variety of positions (elected and agency officials, interest group leaders, researchers etc.) who share a particular belief system – that is, a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions – and who show a nontrivial degree of coordinated activity over time (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p.25).

According to these two authors, the advocacy coalition framework is consistent with the work of previous social scientists since it "synthesizes many of the major findings of the knowledge utilization literature – particularly those concerning the enlightenment function and the advocacy use of analysis – into the broader literature on public-policy making" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p.5).

The framework itself is based on four premises which include a time factor, interactions between actors from different institutions, different levels of government and that the policies are based on particular belief systems. As the authors explain,

> [t]he advocacy coalition framework (ACF) has at least four basic premises: (1) that understanding the process of policy change – and the role of policy-oriented learning therein – requires a time perspective of a decade or more; (2) that the most useful way to think about policy change over such a time span is through a focus on "policy subsystems", that is the interaction of actors from different institutions who follow and seek to influence governmental decisions in a policy area; (3) that those subsystems must include an intergovernmental dimension, that is, they must involve all levels of government (at least for domestic policy); and (4) that public policies (or programs) can be conceptualized in the same manner as belief systems, that is, as sets of value priorities and causal assumptions about how to realize them (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, pp.16-17).

Perhaps the most defining factor regarding this particular framework is its focus on what Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith term "core belief systems" rather than focusing on "interests". The reason for this, they say is because "beliefs are more inclusive and more verifiable than interests" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1984, p.28).

The underlying argument in this framework is that major changes to the core of a policy are usually due to external factors:

> [t]he basic argument of this framework is that, although policy-oriented learning is an important aspect of policy change and can often alter secondary aspects of a coalition's belief system, changes in the core aspects of a policy are usually the results of perturbations in noncognitive factors external to the subsystem, such as macroeconomic conditions or the rise of a new systemic governing coalition (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, pp.19-20).

The framework rests on the assumption that core belief values of members are not only consistent with each other, but also that their belief systems are relatively resistant to change. As the authors explain, [t]he concept of an advocacy coalition assumes that shared beliefs provide the principle 'glue' of politics. Moreover…it assumes that peoples' core beliefs are quite resistant to change" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p.28).

According to Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith there are usually only two to four "important" coalitions at any given time within the system. This is due to the fact that certain factors will, at any given time, push coalitions to coalesce in order to form "effective coalitions" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p.26). They further explain that the goal of these coalitions is to "translate their beliefs into public policies or programs (which usually consist of a set of goals and directions, or empowerments, to administrative agencies for implementing those goals)" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p.28).

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith argue that policy change is the result of two processes. First,

> …advocacy coalitions within the subsystem attempt to translate the policy cores and the secondary aspects of their belief systems into governmental programs…The second process is one of external perturbation, that is, the effects of *system-wide* events – changes in socio-economic conditions, outputs from other subsystems, and changes in the system-wide governing coalition…(Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p.34).

In other words, this hypothesis assumes that a coalition seeks power to translate its core beliefs into policy. Furthermore, as they explain, a coalition will not abandon those core beliefs merely to stay in power (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993, p.34).

The Role of Networks and Think Tanks in the Policy Process

Networks, especially among and between think tanks and research institutes and/or organizations, are an important means for disseminating the policy message that a particular network or community (i.e., policy community, epistemic community) wishes to advocate or push to the forefront of the public agenda. As Stone notes,

> [t]he links, networks and affiliations that think-tanks develop not only among other research organisations but also with the media, bureaucracy and government, foundations and universities, are important and effective means for epistemic and/or policy communities to diffuse their message (Stone, 1996, p.127).

Networks and organizational affiliations are significant features found in the development field and help to enable and encourage knowledge and information sharing concerning current research activities in a given sector, particularly with those who do not have access to professional and scholarly journals or other sources of information (Stone, 1996, p.131). Such networks and networking capabilities are relevant to the IDRC experience. For example, many project reports document research network experiences as both significant and useful in terms of creating opportunities to influence policy. An evaluation report concerning the *Reseau de Recherche sur les Politiques Sociales en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre (RRPS/AOC)"* for example, echoes the notion that networking and network development enhance the likelihood of influencing policy. As explained in the *Annual Report on Evaluation Findings 2001*,

> [i]n terms of the relevance of the research, the study found that the network was highly relevant to the national governments in the region. The three factors which facilitated this relevance include: (1) the composition of the national research teams within the networks which included high level public servants, sector specialists as well as researchers; (2) research plans and priorities were developed through national fora; and (3) the global and multidisciplinary approach to the research (IDRC, p.9).

By including public servants and other members of government, the research was considered to be highly relevant to their context, resulting in a higher potential of influencing the relevant policies. Moreover, as expressed by Stone, "[w]hen networks include the active participation and involvement of decision-makers they have the potential to influence policy" (Stone, 2000, p.15). Again, this argument resonates well with IDRC's experience in relation to networks. The commentary regarding the RRPS/AOC evaluation report goes on to state that the involvement of government was one factor found to strengthen the links between researchers and policy makers and that this linkage enabled the network to increase its potential to influence policy (Annual Report on Evaluation Findings, 2001, IDRC, pp.9-10).

Individual networking is also considered relevant and is an effective means of sharing policy ideas. According to Stone, the personal networks of staff, executives and board members are just as valid and important as other networks discussed earlier. Furthermore, consistent with Caplan's argument that social and professional affiliations are significant features within a policy or academic community, Stone states that "[t]he social and professional interactions of staff and trustees and their sequential career moves across institutional settings builds a web of personal interaction networks" (Stone, 1996, p.133).

As important as these networks and communities are in the policy process, they are not the answer to "policy influence"; they merely act as a route to political influence, rather than as a source of political influence:

> Strictly speaking, networking does not equate with political influence. Networking aids the effectiveness of think-tanks. However, many of the attributes of networks greatly enhance the opportunity for influence. Networking promotes solidarity, loyalty, trust and reciprocity. Conflict and opportunistic behaviour is diminished in favour of co-operation on a common problem of policy project. More resources and intellectual capital can be mobilized in efforts to shape policy agendas (Stone, 1996, p.134).

Furthering this, McGinn's observations also imply that networks are perhaps more effective as sources of knowledge and information sharing than as sources of direct policy impact. According to McGinn, and his review of 25 networks designed to link education researchers across continents and to link researchers with policy makers in developing countries, "networks of researchers have had little impact on education policy in developing countries, although they have developed an impressive body of shared research knowledge" (Reimers and McGinn, 1997, p.91).

Moreover, as discussed previously, some authors (e.g., Reimers and McGinn) perceive networks and networking as based on the stages or linear model. As Reimers and McGinn illustrate in their work on education policy, "[a] networking approach to information education policy assumes that relevant research findings are available or can be generated and that policy makers are disposed and able to act on those findings" (1997, p.76). Furthermore, they also argue that "[p]erhaps because most networks are organized by university-based researchers, the networking approach to knowledge utilization continues to reflect the culture of the expert rather than the culture of the decision maker" (Reimers and McGinn, 1997, p.91).

In sum, the policy network models help to explain the myriad of actors in the process, as well as how they are able to influence the policy process, but they do not explain policy development very well. Moreover, for the most part network models are somewhat rational in nature and as a result do not explain the complexities outside of the actors' environment, particularly in a developing country context.

3.2.2 Agenda-Setting (Multiple Streams) Model

Drawing from the "Garbage Can Model" developed by Cohen, March and Olsen in the 1970s, John Kingdon proposes the agenda-setting model, or multiple streams model as a framework for conceptualizing the policy process.

Unlike the previous models presented in this review which tend to focus on certain elements of the policy process and treat them as separate and distinct units of analysis, Kingdon explores the policymaking process by looking at why and how some subjects and/or alternatives are considered for the policy agenda while others are not using a more holistic and, therefore, realistic portrayal of the system (Kingdon, 1984, p.3).

The main argument of the agenda-setting model is that it gives attention to the flow and timing of policy activities in terms of its focus on how subjects or issues are selected for the policy agenda (problems) and how alternatives are considered (solutions). The crucial point here is the timing and

flow of particular problems and feasible solutions, and when and how they converge. As Porter explains

> on-the-ground realities of policy making are better captured by a model that focuses more on the flow and timing of policy action. In this model, streams of problems, solutions, and politics move independently through the policy system. Occasions arise (sometimes predictably, often not) where the streams are joined. A compelling problem is linked to a plausible solution that meets the test of political feasibility (Porter, 1995, p.3).

According to Kingdon, the main premise underlying his framework is the notion of three streams. As he puts it, "there are three families of processes in federal government agenda-setting: problems, policies, and politics. People recognize problems, they generate proposals for public policy changes, and they engage in such political activities as election campaigns and pressure group lobbying" (Kingdon, 1984, p.92). Kingdon suggests that it is only when these three streams come together at a given point in time that policies change. This occurs when a problem is recognized and is coupled with a solution. This generally happens when a policy entrepreneur champions a particular solution or intervention, and as a result is put on the public agenda. It is at this point that a problem and/or solution is either adopted or dropped from the agenda. He goes on to say that, "[f]ocusing attention on one problem rather than another is often no accident. Activists invest considerable time and energy in their efforts to bring problems to public and governmental attention" (Kingdon, 1984, p.121).

Problem Stream

Kingdon characterizes the problem stream as one that through various means, such as, for example, certain indicators, focusing events and feedback, bring problems to the attention of policy makers. Once their attention is gained, policy makers then use indicators to assess the magnitude of, and the change in, a problem (Kingdon, 1984, p.119). He goes on to explain that not every condition, however, is seen as a "problem":

> [f]or a condition to be a problem, people must become convinced that something should be done to change it. People in and around government make that translation by evaluating conditions in light of their values, by comparisons between people or between [other countries], and by classifying conditions into one category or another (Kingdon, 1984, p.119).

Furthermore, just as a problem can come to the forefront of the public agenda, it can also disappear from the agenda. Kingdon suggests that problems fade from view when government addresses the problem, because people become used to the condition, or because attention to that problem is faddish (Kingdon, 1984, p.119).

Policy Stream

The policy stream, sometimes referred to as the solution stream, is where ideas can be found. These ideas or proposals are generated by a policy community, most often by specialists found within a policy community. New ideas, however, are not necessarily picked up by the policy community as a feasible or functional solution to which all members agree. Some ideas or proposals need a strong figure or champion to push the idea along:

> [g]etting the policy community receptive to a new idea takes a long period of softening up. Policy entrepreneurs…push their ideas in many ways. They aim to soften up the general public, more specialized publics, and the policy community itself (Kingdon, 1984, p.151).

Policy entrepreneurs often advocate for the prominence of an idea. Kingdon suggests two incentives for advocating specific proposals:

> [o]ne incentive that prompts advocacy is the promotion of personal interests. This might mean the protection of bureaucratic turf – keeping one's job, expanding one's agency, promoting one's personal career…Second, people sometimes advocate proposals because they want to promote their values, or affect the shape of public policy (Kingdon, 1984, pp.129-130).

On reflection, these two points are relevant to IDRC and the researchers it supports since IDRC works to promote its development research turf in order to maintain its current level of resources and expand its programming. Moreover, since an IDRC objective is to influence public policy, it seems fair to say that IDRC and its researchers work to promote their values as well as the organizational values in relation to shaping and/or affecting public policy.

Kingdon proposes two major criteria, or what he calls the "survival criteria" for solutions/ideas to survive the political stream: technical feasibility and value acceptability. If proposals fail to meet either of these two criteria then they are not likely to be considered as serious, viable options (Kingdon, 1984, p.138).

In sum, the policy stream

> …produces a short list of proposals. This short list is not necessarily a consensus in the policy community on the one proposal that meets their criteria; rather, it is an agreement that a few proposals are prominent. Having a viable alternative available for adoption facilitates the high placement of a subject on a governmental agenda, and dramatically increases the chances for placement of a decision agenda (Kingdon, 1984, p.151).

Once it has reached the decision agenda, it becomes part of the political stream.

Political Stream

According to Kingdon, there are three components in the political stream: (1) national mood; (2) organized political interests; and (3) government. Based on the swings of national mood, the balance of political interests, and events in government, the political stream is seen to have its own dynamics and flow. As a result of these features, the political stream flows along according to its own rules:

> [i]ndependently of the problems and policy streams, the political stream flows along according to its own dynamics and its own rules. It is composed of such factors as swings in national mood, election results, changes of administration...and interest group pressure campaigns (Kingdon, 1984, p.170).

These factors are, in part, responsible for what subjects are put on the agenda. For example, a combination of national mood and an election "has particularly powerful impacts on the agenda. It can force some subjects high on the agenda, and can also make it virtually impossible for government to pay serious attention to others" (Kingdon, 1984, p.172). This is an important point, however it is very much based on a Western, democratic regime. Kingdon does not provide any description of how subjects may or may not appear on the agenda in non-democratic or one-party states. Neither does he discuss countries where there are no "organized interests" to speak of. These are some of the limitations this framework has in relation to conceptualizing public policy processes in a developing country context.

Policy Windows

Once a problem is defined, and a solution is produced or found, there needs to be an opportunity for initiatives to be adopted. Kingdon refers to these opportunities as "policy windows" and they occur because of changes in the political stream. Examples of a policy window opening may be a change in government or a swing in national mood (Kingdon, 1984, p.176). Once the window opens, however, it does not stay open very long:

> [t]he window closes for a variety of reasons. First, participants may feel they have addressed the problem through decision or enactment...Second, and closely related, the participants may fail to get action...Third, the event that prompted the window to open may pass from the scene...Fourth, if a change in personnel opens a window, the personnel may change again (Kingdon, 1984, pp.177-178).

Finally, Kingdon notes "sometimes the window closes because there is no available alternative...The opportunity passes if the ready alternative is not available" (1984, p.178). This is also relevant to the IDRC experience since the research and/or homework must be completed in order for policy makers to pay attention to their ideas, proposals and/or solutions. However, this is a challenging task since it is difficult to know for certain when a policy window will open. It is even more difficult or challenging to manipulate the process (Kingdon, 1984, p.179).

As an analyst for an interest group explains,

> As I see it, people who are trying to advocate change are like surfers waiting for the big wave. You get out there, you have to be ready to go, you have to be ready to paddle. If you're not ready to paddle when the big wave comes along, you're not going to ride it in (Kingdon, 1984, p.173).

More often than not, problems are defined and particular solutions are advocated because of a political event or because it becomes important to a politician:

> [i]n contrast to a problem-solving model, in which people become aware of a problem and consider alternative solutions, solutions float around in and near government, searching for problems to which to become attached or political events that increase their likelihood of adoption. These proposals are constantly in the policy stream, but then suddenly they become elevated on the governmental agenda because they can be seen as solutions to a pressing problem or because politicians find their sponsorship expedient (p.181).

An important point that has emerged from this discussion is the importance of the 'coupling' between the different elements or components:

> [i]f one of the three elements is missing – if a solution is not available, a problem cannot be found or is not sufficiently compelling, or support is not forthcoming from the political stream – then the subject's place on the agenda is fleeting. The window may be open for a short time, but if the coupling is not made quickly, the window closes (Kingdon, 1984, p.187).

What is crucial, then, throughout this process is the policy entrepreneur.

Policy Entrepreneurs

According to Kingdon, an individual must possess three critical qualities to be considered a successful policy entrepreneur (1984, p.189-190). First, the person has some claim to a hearing and that this claim comes from one of three sources: "expertise; an ability to speak for others, as in the case of the leader of a powerful interest group; or an authoritative decision-making position" (Kingdon, 1984, p.189); second, the individual must be known for his or her "political connections or negotiating skill" (Kingdon, 1984, p.190); and third, "successful entrepreneurs are persistent" (Kingdon, 1984, p.190). As Kingdon explains, "many potentially influential people might have expertise and political skill, but sheer tenacity pays off" (1984, p.190).

As suggested earlier, it is the policy entrepreneur who generally couples a particular problem with a particular solution and pushes for its attention on the political agenda. Because of this, it is the policy entrepreneur who is considered to be central to the entire process:

> [w]hen researching case studies, one can nearly always pinpoint a particular person, or at most a few persons, who were central in moving a subject up on the agenda and into position for enactment. Indeed, in our 23 case studies, we coded entrepreneurs as very or somewhat important in 15, and found them unimportant in only 3 (Kingdon, 1984, p.189).

The need for a champion is further echoed by Bernard and Wind, who claim that, in relation to the IDRC experience, "[s]eriousness is not, it seems, a sufficient condition for enabling research impact. It appears to be necessary that someone actually care about the issue, and know how to make the seriousness 'real' before much happens" (Wind & Bernard, 1998, p.4-5). As Kingdon succinctly states: "[w]ithout the presence of an entrepreneur, the linking of the streams may not take place. Good ideas lie fallow for lack of an advocate. Problems are unsolved for a lack of solution. Political events are not capitalized for lack of inventive and developed proposals" (1984, p.191).

Furthermore, some IDRC programs may relate to the idea that "policy entrepreneurs must develop their ideas, expertise, and proposals well in advance of the time the window opens. Without that earlier consideration and softening up, they cannot take advantage of the window when it opens" (Kingdon, 1984, p.190). This statement may well resonate with those program staff who try to anticipate the policy opportunities within various countries.

In sum, it is the timing of different events within the various streams, along with someone who is willing to invest time and energy to champion an idea or a proposal in order for subjects to be placed on the decision agenda. As long as the idea or proposal is technically feasible and coincides with the values of the policy community, the idea may in fact be adopted and policy change will occur.

3.2.3 Policy Narratives

Policy narratives draw from the development discourse literature which stems from a post-modernist framework. From a policy inquiry perspective, this framework emphasizes "...how language or discourse shapes the policy agenda, and how problems and solutions are understood. It is not external events that cause policy change, but how these events are perceived" (Stone et al., 2001, p.12). In general, a policy narrative is a

> ...'story', having a beginning, middle and end, outlining a specific course of events which has gained the status of conventional wisdom within the development arena. The 'tragedy of the commons' is a policy narrative, for example, which outlines the series of events leading from the overgrazing of common land by pastoralists to eventual desertification (Sutton, 1999, p.7).

Narratives do, however, differ from discourses in that discourses involve a wider set of values and way of thinking, while narratives describe a 'story' found within that broader discourse:

> Policy narratives are distinct from discourses, which refer to a wider set of values and way of thinking. A narrative can be part of a discourse if it describes a specific 'story' which is in line with the broader set of values and priorities of the discourse (Sutton, 1999, p.7).

Emery Roe, the main proponent of the narrative model, explains that these 'stories' exist, and persist, because they simplify very complex issues and processes into stories on which policy makers can then base their decisions:

> Rural development is a genuinely uncertain activity, and one of the principle ways practitioners, bureaucrats and policy makers articulate and make sense of this uncertainty is to tell stories or scenarios that simplify the ambiguity (Roe, 1991, p.288).

Roe suggests that what is perhaps the most significant feature of such stories is that they continue to persist even when there is evidence to the contrary which calls into question the validity of the narrative. As such, they are a very powerful force:

> Even when their truth-value is in question, these narratives are explicitly more programmatic than myths and have the objective of getting their hearers to believe or do something (Roe, 1991, p.288).

Using the 'tragedy of the commons' as an example, Roe explains that although there continues to be mounting empirical evidence that climatological changes and competing land uses have led to degradation more than has the commons,

> ...the tragedy of the commons continues to have staying power in large part because these negative findings and critiques in no way dispel the chief virtue of the narrative: it has helped to stabilize and underwrite the assumptions needed for decision making. Policy makers resort to the tragedy of the commons model in order to understand what is going on and what must be done in lieu of more elaborate and demanding analysis, particularly when such analysis leads only to doubts and uncertainties about just what the story is behind rural resource utilization (Roe, 1991, p.290).

Indeed, as Sutton explains, it is this very uncertainty that strengthens or validates the narrative even when there is evidence to the contrary:

> [d]espite evidence which calls into question the validity of many narratives, they persist widely because they simplify complex development processes. They are an attempt to bring order to the complex multitude of interactions and processes which characterise development situations. Policy makers often base policy decisions on the stories outlined in development narratives (Sutton, 1999, p.7).

In other words, it is the ability of the narrative to simplify complex situations and/or issues that is the true strength behind the story, regardless of the empirical evidence or data that belie the story.

"Consequently, developing 'policy narratives' that become the conventional wisdom are [sic] an important strategy in communicating research" (Roe, 1994, quoted in Stone et al., 2001, p.12).

Perhaps even more compelling, is the idea that narratives have need of 'counternarratives' rather than empirical evidence, which call into question current policies. These counternarratives must also be 'stories', in that they must include a beginning, a middle and an end, and that they work towards reducing uncertainty by providing answers, not by merely stating that reality is more complex than the narrative expresses. As Roe explains,

> [t]he operating assumption here is that if decision makers are to move beyond the prevailing model of an entirely unmanaged and open-access commons, they will do so not merely by being told that reality is more complex than has been thought, but also by having a counternarrative which can predict when common property management will take place or not and what are the implications of either event (Roe, 1991, p.290).

In terms of how narratives are communicated, Sutton suggests that they are transmitted through policy networks and communities and as a result, tend to become associated with particular programs and methods of data collection and analysis:

> [n]arratives are transmitted through policy networks and communities. Narratives develop their own 'cultural paradigm' as they become influential: that is, certain types of development programmes, methods of data collection and analysis become associated with particular narratives (Sutton, 1999, p.11).

With regards to research, Stone et al. state that,

> [r]esearch can be influential in providing knowledge that supports the policy preferences of political leaders, or in providing a foundation for 'counter-discourses', alternative identities and sites of resistance (Stone et al., 2001, p.12).

According to Sutton, the narrative model is criticized because narratives are believed to support 'blueprint development' which often serves to justify the role of the expert and outsiders in the policy process:

> Narratives are criticized because it is believed they cause 'blueprint' development, that is, a prescribed set of solutions to an issue used at times and in places where it may not be applicable. Narratives serve the interests of certain groups, usually the epistemic communities or policy networks that sustain them; and help to transfer ownership of the development process to members of these epistemic communities. They often serve to reduce the role and perceived expertise of indigenous groups, providing justification for the role of experts and outsiders in the policy process (Sutton, 1999, pp.11-12).

In terms of their relevance to this study, using a policy narrative analysis may help to explain the perceptions of policy makers and/or researchers as to whether or not research does or does not inform public policy. This type of analysis, therefore, may help to draw out either the continuity or discontinuity which may exist among and between researchers and policy makers. As a result, this framework would enable the study to address factors which either inhibit or facilitate the influence of research on the public policy process in a manner that resonates with the perceptions of both researchers and policy makers and therefore produces a much more complete picture. As well, this may also provide a deeper understanding as to why policy influence is often construed as a positive development outcome, even when empirical evidence suggests negative consequences.

3.2.4 Policy Transfer Model

The study of policy transfer emerged as a sub-set of the comparative politics literature, and which draws from the diffusion literature (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p.344). Similar to the knowledge utilization literature, the diffusion literature, as related to the policy process, suggests that "policy percolates or diffuses gradually over an extended period of time…this perspective posits incremental changes in policy with the advancement of knowledge and awareness as well as interdependence" (Stone, 2000, p.4). An important critique of the diffusion literature, however, points to the problems and weaknesses of the diffusion approach:

> '[t]he major problem with this research tradition is that it reveals nothing about the content of new policies. Its fascination is the process not substance'. It was as a result of this perceived need to answer questions ignored by diffusion studies that comparative policy analysts began discussing lesson drawing and policy transfer (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p.345).

The study of policy transfer also brings the main ideas of the lesson-drawing literature as advanced by Rose. According to Dolowitz and Marsh,

> …policy transfer, emulation and lesson drawing all refer to a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions etc. in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another time and/or place (Dolowitz and March, 1996, p.344).

As this citation indicates, the process of using the knowledge regarding policy development, along with all of the administrative arrangements and institutions necessary for their development, and transferring them to another time and/or place is central to the policy transfer model. Succinctly stated, "policy transfer refers to a process by which actors borrow policies developed in one setting to develop programmes and policies in another" (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p.355). The most oft cited example of policy transfer is the privatization process that occurred during the 1980s in Britain, the US, and then spreading to other Western and non-Western countries throughout the 1990s and beyond (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p.347).

In their review of the policy transfer literature, Dolowitz and Marsh identify seven objects for policy transfer: (1) policy goals, structure and content; (2) policy instruments or administrative techniques;

(3) institutions; (4) ideology; (5) ideas; (6) attitudes and concepts; and (7) negative lessons (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p.350). In terms of what can be transferred, they explain that "...both general policy ideas and specific policy instruments can be transferred, but that the borrower may pick and choose what to borrow", depending on what occurred in the original country and what is needed by the borrower (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p.350). Marsh and Dolowitz also identify six main categories involved in policy transfer: elected officials, political parties, bureaucrats/civil servants, pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs/experts, and supra-national institutions (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p.345).

There are several factors which either constrain or facilitate the policy transfer process. According to Rose, complexity is a major factor constraining the transfer of policies: the more complex a policy or program the less likely it is to be transferred. With respect to this, Rose offers six hypotheses which are presented in Box 4.

Box 4: Rose's Six Hypotheses Regarding Policy Transfer:

(1) Programmes with a single goal are much easier to transfer than programmes with multiple goals;

(2) The simpler the problem the more likely transfer will occur;

(3) The more direct the relationship between the problem and the 'solution' is perceived to be the more likely it is to be transferred;

(4) The fewer the perceived side-effects of a policy the greater the possibility of transfer;

(5) The more information agents have about how a programme operates in another location the easier it is to transfer;

(6) The more easily outcomes can be predicted the simpler a programme is to transfer.

Source: Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p.353

Rose also stresses past policy as an important constraint to policy transfer and one which is often neglected:

> [p]olicy makers are inheritors before they are choosers; as a condition of taking office they swear to uphold the laws and programs that predecessors have set...new programs cannot be constructed on green field sites...they must be introduced into a policy environment dense with past commitments (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p.353).

According to Stone, networks facilitate the policy transfer process (Stone, 2000, p.1). She argues that

> [w]ithin such networks, knowledge organisations perform useful roles as information clearing-houses, initiating research and developing network infrastructure – starting newsletters, building data-bases, organising conferences, moderating e-dialogues and preparing submissions. Such infrastructure aids policy transfer agents to become aware of innovative policies adopted elsewhere and the opportunity to provide analysis and commentary of the relevance of such policies to their own context (Stone, 2000, p.15).

This is consistent with the view that networks help to enable and encourage knowledge and information sharing concerning current research and policy activities in terms of their role in relation to think tanks. As a source of knowledge and information sharing, networks can easily facilitate the policy transfer process by acting as the conduit between the various actors found within the process.

Stone goes on to argue that international organizations, think tanks, researchers and consultancies often perform the role of policy transfer agent or policy entrepreneur (Stone, 2000, p.21). As she explains,

> [t]hrough networks, participants can build alliances, share discourses and construct consensual knowledge. From this basis, policy entrepreneurs can work to shape the terms of debate, networking with members of a policy making community, crafting arguments and 'brokering' their ideas to potential supporters and patrons (Stone, 2000, p.15).

Stone also points out that the non-governmental status of some organizations and non-state actors can in fact be a constraint to their role in policy transfer. She goes on to say however, that

> [n]evertheless, non-state actors may be better at 'soft' transfer of broad policy ideas influencing public opinion and policy agendas. By contrast, officials are more involved in 'hard' transfer of policy practices and instruments involving formal decision-making (Stone, 2000, p.24).

These are important points to keep in mind when considering the role of IDRC in research and/or policy networks.

Anthony Nedley, however, points to a particular weakness within the policy transfer literature: the lack of research and analysis which examines the South-North transfer of policies. In his paper on policy transfer Nedley seeks to highlight and further define

> ...important weaknesses in current policy transfer analysis: that it is inherently biased towards transfer between the developed nations. As such the analysis fails to acknowledge the opportunities available for lesson-drawing from developing country experience, which in turn imposes a limit to the number and types of policy options available to policymakers (Nedley, 2000, p.31).

Thus the main argument for Nedley is that the literature ignores the experiences of the South and, therefore, misses the many opportunities for the North to learn from the South's experiences with policy processes. For him, the current framework is based on the erroneous assumption that all policy transfer traffic occurs either as North-North transfers, or as North-South transfers. Nedley uses two case studies as examples of how policy transfer from a South-North direction has occurred. These case studies focus in particular on health policies, especially community health practices and health sector reforms using one case from England and one from Tanzania. For him,

> [t]he importance of this project lies in attempting to provide a more balanced policy learning environment between important programmes in both hemispheres. The objective is to open up the literature to potentially fertile areas of research in developing countries, and through this to promote fresh lesson-drawing opportunities for policymakers in developed countries (Nedley, 2000, p.1).

In sum, the policy transfer process, often facilitated through networks, is a two-way street and thus should be treated as such.

4.0 Issues

Few studies examine issues related to research quality in terms of rigour (i.e., validity and reliability) or completeness and how research quality impacts on policy development. Not giving serious attention to the issue of research quality may in practice jeopardize positive intentions with negative consequences or outcomes simply because the research did not explore all the feasible and/or available policy recommendations.

In addition, there are issues related to what Diane Stone labels as 'perceived influence' and what Ivan Krastev identifies as 'faking influence'. What is perceived as being influential, how that perception is translated into evidence of influence, as well as researchers' claim of policy influence are important issues that need addressing since many of these perceptions and claims suggest that policy influence is a positive development outcome.

Attention must also be given to new policy fields, such as those associated with information and communication technologies (ICTs) where the growth and diffusion of technologies and their application to development problems is extremely rapid and, as a result of this diffusion, may have far-reaching impacts in many other sectors as well. Furthermore, because some of these fields (e.g., genetics, tobacco control) work towards policy development at the supra-national or global level, past experience may not be applicable to current issues in these areas.

Finally, there are also new policy environments where preliminary evidence indicates that policy makers in, what are now independent nation states (e.g., Ukraine), are seeking knowledge, information and advice from researchers in order to develop national policies where none previously existed. The question here is how the policy processes in these 'transition countries' where, in some cases, governance systems have undergone radical policy changes, work to either inhibit or facilitate the use of research.

4.1 Research Quality

Research quality is an important element that policy makers take into account when considering research in relation to policy development. Moreover, research quality will often determine the credibility of the organization that either conducts or financially supports the research/researcher(s) and as such may also determine the credibility and/or integrity of the research field itself as a source of useable knowledge. As Stone explains, research institutes need to establish an identity as

> ...independent and educational organizations committed to promoting the public interest. Establishing this identity is important in order to be effective, that is, to be regarded as a reputable and authoritative source of opinion as well as to retain their concessionary tax status as non-profit organizations (Stone, 1996, p.105).

In relation to the concept of research quality, Seck and Phillips note *rigour* as a "primary quality" or characteristic which may help to determine the quality of the research. They define rigour as:

> Research that is free of faults in design, method and interpretation is more useful because it is more likely to lead to intrinsically good policy options. Hasty, overly partisan research, or research conducted by incompetent staff typically lacks rigour. It is noteworthy that rigorous research is not synonymous with academic or path-breaking theoretical research (Seck and Phillips, 2001, p.4).

Completeness is also an important characteristic to consider, and one that is often overlooked by the researchers themselves, or by those who are supporting the research. In terms of completeness, Seck and Phillips state that,

> This concept relates to exploring all potential options, and making available all relevant facts and figures that research can uncover in the search for intrinsically good policy options. Its distinct characteristic is that it completes the information provided by the various groups of policy stakeholders in the attempt to make all relevant factors and considerations have a bearing on the outcome of the policy decision-making process (Seck and Phillips, 2001, p.4).

Research lacking completeness, or is limited in either the interpretation, explanation or exploration of available and/or feasible options, may, in practice, encourage the development of policies which produce negative development outcomes. Stone et al. suggest that research credibility and integrity is important to maintain quality policy formulation that does not simply justify or legitimize certain policies which may not be beneficial:

> The credibility of research can not be taken for granted. Certain practices are essential to maintaining the public stature of knowledge producers. Some research is more rigorous, professional and scholarly, adhering to recognized standards of peer review. Such standards need to be cultivated and protected as policy-makers and other users usually require policy research and analysis produced in a professional context. In other words, they want research findings that help legitimate policy and these come from recognized institutions and experts (Stone et al., 2001, p.28).

Maintaining professional scholarly standards may help to limit the "selective" use of findings which simply promote particular policies in ways that were not intended by the researchers.

Research produced by developing country scholars is often considered to be of poor quality. For the most part, this is due to the limited amount of funding developing country governments allocate to research. Moreover, researchers and research institutions in the South do not have the history or experience that researchers in the West have in terms of conducting research and utilizing the results to apply to technologies and/or policies. This lack of research funding in practice translates into a limited capacity of researchers in developing countries to produce quality research that is considered to be credible. As a result, policy makers in these countries often utilize research results or research consultants originating from industrialized countries, since this research is perceived to be of better quality and therefore a more credible base for decisions. The question remains, however, as to whether or not there is some sort of trade-off between producing high quality research by outsiders or producing indigenous research that may be of lower quality and, therefore, may not have any impact on the policymaking process. However, as this paper suggests, the ***quality*** of the research, although important, is only ***one*** aspect of its likelihood to influence policy makers.

Donor agencies, such as IDRC, which help to build the capacity of researchers and research institutions in developing countries, empower people to produce high quality research. The strengthening of their capacity is not just in terms of the technical quality (i.e., rigour) but also with respect to the relevance and usefulness of the research results: because it is from their own perspective, using their own perceptions to analyze and interpret the data, the research will be more relevant to their context, (including the political environment), and will strengthen their data collection and analysis skills.

From this perspective, capacity building is not seen as a 'trade-off' per se relative to the quality of the research; rather, capacity building is seen as a strategy to increase the relevance and utilization of the research results that will, in turn, lead to higher quality research that may influence public policy.

4.2 Perceived Influence / "Faking" Influence

Another emerging issue is what Diane Stone terms as "perceived influence". According to Stone, most of what we define as influence is based on what we perceive as being influential. Further, what we perceive as being influential is often used as an indicator to provide 'evidence' of influence. In order to be considered 'credible', think tanks need to provide "evidence" of influence and as a result spend a considerable amount of resources on "indicators" of influence:

> [p]olicy making is mainly driven by interests, not by ideas. Yet executives are frequently asked to produce evidence that they have direct impact on the policy and legislative processes. There is a lot of anecdotal information. Virtually everyone interviewed was able to provide an example of how their institute was directly involved in the initiation of policy or legislative change. To be more systematic, however, most think-tanks devote considerable resources to compiling indicators of influence (Stone, 1996, pp.106-107).

To illustrate this point, she describes several different ways think tanks express this "influence". One example is provided by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London which "assesses its effectiveness in its ability to place economists in the public sectors of developing countries. Since 1963, over 350 Fellows have been placed in 23 countries. Many former ODI Fellows 'hold responsible positions in agencies and companies dealing with the Third World'" (ODI, 1985, p.4 quoted in Stone, 1996, p.112). On the other hand, some individuals consider "having access to people in senior positions", bringing new ideas or different perspectives into the public debate, or having the ability to attract senior officials to meetings as being indicators of influence (Stone, 1996, p.112). IDRC has similar anecdotal evidence in terms of what staff perceive as "influence". For example, members of IDRC staff have described situations in some countries where past grant recipients and/or project leaders are now in a position to influence government policies either because they are senior advisors to certain ministers or because they are the minister. However, as described elsewhere in this paper, a few studies have shown (e.g., Bernard and Wind, Edwards) that close relations with government officials do not necessarily guarantee policy influence.

Related to the issue of perceived influence is the issue of 'faking influence'. In his examination of think tanks in post-communist countries in Eastern and Central Europe, Ivan Krastev remarks that there are several factors explaining the so-called "influence" of think tanks on policy:

> ...it was not the strength of the independent research but the weakness of the other players in the realm of post-communist policy making that made think tanks influential players. The lack of confidence between the reform governments and the administration that they inherited, the weak policy capacities of the political parties, the unwillingness of the universities and academics of science to commit themselves to policy research, and the underdeveloped business community are the main factors explaining the 'Heritage moment' [or the direct influence on the governmental agenda] of the post-communist think tanks (Krastev, 2000, p.147).

This example illustrates the importance of taking into account the context in which the research-policy nexus is said to have occurred including: the political history and governance regime where the institute is located; the type of institute that is conducting the research; and the type of research being conducted.

4.3 New Policy Fields and Environments

The information and technology (ICT) field is the fastest growing sector and one that has limited experience in terms of policy development. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature or characteristic

that is particular to this sector is the speed at which technological innovations are produced, promoted and implemented and which have an impact on so many different sectors. As Gillian Marcelle explains,

> [a]s a result of the rapid diffusion of ICTs, the sector has grown in size, scale and importance...The ICT sector forms part of what is referred to as the *knowledge sector*, which is the fastest growing area of the global economy. Between 1980 and 1994, the share of high technology products in international trade doubled, from 12% to 24% (Marcelle, 2000, p.5).

National governments and policymakers are struggling to keep up with the pace of change in order to develop policies and regulations regarding ICT products and services among other things. Moreover, as Marcelle points out, policy development in this sector is further complicated by the fact that, "ICT firms and the formal institutions that set policies, standards and regulations for them are regarded as *technical* and *professional* bodies that give little thought to social considerations and political processes" (Marcelle, 2000, p.19). She goes on to say that,

> The sector's decision-makers tend to hold technologically deterministic view of development. They see the diffusion of their products and services as automatically leading to outcomes that are benign and universally beneficial and fail to incorporate in their operations, processes for evaluation, assessment and reviews of purposes, meanings and results. Their policies and practices are defined by a single interest group and there are few opportunities for other standpoints to compensate for that group's blind spots and shortcomings (Marcelle, 2000, p.19).

Others argue, however, that new policy fields provide 'windows of opportunity' for research to influence policy that might not otherwise exist. Anecdotal evidence offered by IDRC staff involved in ICT programming areas suggests that researchers are being called on more and more by national governments to assist with policy formulation and development. This suggests that past policy experience, or existing policies in similar sectors, has not provided policymakers with the knowledge or resources they need to produce satisfactory policies.

Other fields that are growing rapidly and are considered to be relatively new for IDRC-supported researchers and its programs include policies related to genetic resources and international tobacco control. What is perhaps the most significant feature in these fields is that policy makers are seeking advice from researchers regarding international conventions since policymaking in an area such as genetics within a global context, is so new. There is little in terms of past experience that these actors can draw on for information. These international conventions, in turn, influence national governments' policies in relation to genetic resource or tobacco control legislations. This often requires further knowledge at a national level in order to generate information as to what implications these international policies have at the national, regional and local levels.

The rapidity of growth and diffusion of these fields implies that neither the linear model nor the incremental model are sufficient to explain the changes occurring since the policy changes and/or

decisions in these sectors are likely to be more fundamental in nature rather than routine or incremental. These are, however, some of the issues that this study hopes to address.

The establishment of newly independent states, such as Ukraine for example, has also meant the development, adoption and implementation of new national policies. Although these new national policies encompass policy fields which are not necessarily 'new' in and of themselves, (e.g., international trade policies, environmental policies, or health and education policies), there is no previous history or experience in developing policies at a national level in these countries. Moreover, many of these countries have also experienced extraordinary economic and political reforms which have moved many of these countries from state-controlled regimes to democratic regimes, where non-state actors now have a 'window of opportunity' to influence public policies. In addition to the issues related to new policy fields, this study also expects to address issues related to governance systems and new policy environments.

5.0 Summary

It is important to recognize that each model presented here has elements which are relevant to the IDRC experience and, therefore, to the overall study on IDRC-supported research and its influence on policy.

In relation to "research" and "use" – how the research is conducted and for what purpose, will shape its relevance and usefulness to policymakers. In other words, whether or not it is participatory in nature and whether or not it is considered to be "research as data" for the purpose of generating knowledge or for problem-solving, or "research as ideas" to "enlighten" policy makers by conducting "action research", will shape or determine whether or not, and how, it informs policy makers.

Furthermore, each of the policy process models described here are relevant to one degree or another. It is important to consider that each model, or elements of each model, may be useful for different reasons or purposes, at any given point in time. What remains as the key factor is knowing what is needed within that particular context or policy environment at that given time: "Different models of knowledge utilization suggest varying strategies for making research matter in policy" (Stone et al., 2001, p.12).

Finally, this review also reveals that there are several gaps in relation to policy processes - especially with respect to developing countries. To begin with, references and works from a developing country perspective are woefully lacking. Second, each of the models presented in this paper assumes democracy; yet for many developing countries, democracy and the process of democratization is either absent or is in its infancy. So what kind of policy processes do these models represent for developing countries? What about those countries where non-state actors are not involved in the policy process because the state does not allow for them to? What about one-party states or authoritarian states, or those states controlled by dictators? Developing countries with violent histories, including colonialism, military governments or strong dependencies on

international organizations such as the IMF or World Bank, would not be consistent with many of these frameworks, especially the rational frameworks.

Conducting case studies in several different regions in the South, including, South Asia, South East Asia, West, East and South Africa, North Africa and the Middle East, and Latin America, will add considerable knowledge and information about policy processes in developing countries. It is also anticipated that in so doing, IDRC will also address those issues related to policy processes found within varying governance systems.

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